AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The following is the status of the claims of the above-captioned application, as amended.

Claims 1-40 (Canceled).

Claim 41 (Currently amended). A method for enhancing secretion of a protein of interest, the method comprising expressing said protein in a *Bacillus* progeny cell derived from a *Bacillus* parent cell, wherein

a) the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one gene encoding metallo regulated gene A (MrgA) protein with an amino acid sequence ~~which is a~~having at least 90% ~~identical~~ identity to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 and/~~or~~, optionally, further comprising a DNA segment operably linked with the encoding gene, wherein said gene ~~and/or~~ and, optionally said DNA segment is manipulated with respect to the parent cell; or

b) the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises two or more copies of a gene encoding MrgA protein with an amino acid sequence which ~~is~~ has at least 90% ~~identical~~ identity to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2,

wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell produces greater amounts of MrgA protein with an amino acid sequence ~~which is~~having at least 90% ~~identical~~ identity to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 than the parent cell, and wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell produces greater amounts of protein of interest than the *Bacillus* parent cell.

Claim 42-45 (Canceled).

Claim 46 (Currently amended). A method for producing a protein of interest, comprising the steps of:

a) cultivating a *Bacillus* progeny cell derived from a *Bacillus* parent cell, wherein

~~a~~1) the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one gene encoding metallo regulated gene A (MrgA) protein with an amino acid sequence ~~which is~~having at least 90% ~~identical~~ identity to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 ~~and/or~~and, optionally, further comprising a DNA segment operably linked with the encoding gene, wherein said gene and, ~~/or~~ optionally said DNA segment is manipulated with respect to the *Bacillus* parent cell; or

~~b~~2) the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises two or more copies of a gene encoding MrgA protein with an amino acid sequence having~~which is~~ at least 90% identity~~identical~~ to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell produces greater amounts of MrgA protein with an amino acid sequence having~~which is~~ at least 90% identity

~~identical~~ to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2 than the *Bacillus* parent cell, and wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell produces greater amounts of a protein of interest than the *Bacillus* parent cell; and

b) recovering the protein.

Claim 47 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the progeny cell is a *Bacillus* bacterial cell.

Claim 48 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell is of a species chosen from the group consisting of *Bacillus alkalophilus, Bacillus amyloliquefaciens, Bacillus brevis, Bacillus circulans, Bacillus coagulans, Bacillus lautus, Bacillus lentus, Bacillus licheniformis, Bacillus stearothermophilus, Bacillus subtilis,* and *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Claim 49 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein said protein of interest is homologous or heterologous.

Claim 50 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein said protein is a protease, a lipase, a cutinase, an amylase, a galactosidase, a pullulanase, a cellulase, a glucose isomerase, a protein disulphide isomerase, a CGT'ase (cyclodextrin gluconotransferase), a phytase, a glucose oxidase, a glucosyl transferase, lactase, bilirubin oxidase, a xylanase, an antigenic microbial or protozoan protein, a bacterial protein toxin, a microbial surface protein, or a viral protein.

Claim 51 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the MrgA protein comprises an amino acid sequence which is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 52 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the MrgA protein ~~or~~ comprises the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 53 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide encoding MrgA protein

comprising an amino acid sequence which is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 54 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide encoding MrgA protein comprising the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 55 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide, which:

a) comprises a polynucleotide sequence which is at least 90% identical to the sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1; or

b) hybridizes with the sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1, under medium stringency conditions.

Claim 56 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein transcribed from one or more heterologous and~~/or~~, optionally, artificial promoter.

Claim 57 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein integrated into the genome of the cell.

Claim 58 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein present on an extra-chromosomal construct.

Claim 59 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell is a bacterial cell.

Claim 60 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell is of a species chosen from the group consisting of *Bacillus alkalophilus, Bacillus amyloliquefaciens, Bacillus brevis, Bacillus circulans, Bacillus coagulans, Bacillus lautus, Bacillus lentus, Bacillus licheniformis, Bacillus stearothermophilus, Bacillus subtilis,* and *Bacillus thuringiensis.*

Claim 61 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein said protein of interest is homologous or heterologous.

Claim 62 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein said protein is a protease, a lipase, a cutinase, an amylase, a galactosidase, a pullulanase, a cellulase, a glucose isomerase, a protein disulphide isomerase, a CGT'ase (cyclodextrin gluconotransferase), a phytase, a glucose oxidase, a glucosyl transferase, lactase, bilirubin oxidase, a xylanase, an antigenic microbial or protozoan protein, a bacterial protein toxin, a microbial surface protein, or a viral protein.

Claim 63 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the MrgA protein comprises an amino acid sequence which is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 64 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the MrgA protein or comprises the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 65 (Currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the *Bacillus* progeny cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide encoding MrgA protein comprising an amino acid sequence which is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.